

Distr.: General
5 April 2024

Original: English only

Economic Commission for Europe

UNECE Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

UN/LOCODE Advisory Group

2024 meeting

Hamburg, 16-17 April 2024

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Report from the secretariat

Report on the UN/LOCODE activities since the 2023 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group

Summary

The secretariat prepared a report detailing the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) activities since its last meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group in 2023.

The report provides a summary of the major activities and the developments related to UN/LOCODE, such as the set-up of the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team (formerly called Task Force) and its activities, the follow-up and developments on the use of UN/LOCODE for sustainable fisheries and maritime security, the UN/LOCODE maintenance and the future UN/LOCODE eco-system.

This document is submitted to the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for information.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) identifies locations uniquely and unambiguously for international trade and transport. It is a five-character code where the first two characters represent the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) country/territory code (ISO 3166-1) followed by a three-character code unique within that country.
2. As specified in its Terms of Reference (ToRs), the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, established under the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), advises and supports the UNECE secretariat and UN/CEFACT in the maintenance and further expansion of UN/LOCODE.
3. The UN/LOCODE Advisory Group was established by the Executive Committee (EXCOM) in 2017 (decision ECE/EX/2017/L.10) and was further extended for two years in 2019 (decision ECE/EX/2019/L.6) and in 2022 (decision ECE/EX/2022/L.5)
4. Considering the valuable work of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, at its twenty-ninth session (Geneva, 9–10 November 2023), the UN/CEFACT Plenary adopted the Programme of Work of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, as contained in document (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/23) and decided to extend its mandate for the period 2024–2025 (Plenary decision 23-20). On 13 February 2024, the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the Programme of Work of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, as well as the extension of its mandate for the period 2024–2025.

II. Overview of new developments

5. Since the last annual meeting, the secretariat, supported by the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team, has generated two updates to the UN/LOCODE directory: 2023-1 and 2023-2. These were published on the UNECE website in July and December 2023, as scheduled.¹
6. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) registered the UPU International Mail Processing Centre code as the fourth UN/LOCODE Child code in the UN/LOCODE Child Code Repository².
7. At its 29th session of the UN/CEFACT Plenary, held on 9-10 November 2023, UN/CEFACT:
 - Endorsed the Report of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group at its 2023 meeting (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/22)³.
 - Approved the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group’s Programme of Work 2024-2025 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/23)⁴.
 - Noted the Executive Guide on UN/LOCODE Maintenance prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2023/14)⁵.
8. The UN/CEFACT Plenary encouraged all delegations to have a UN/LOCODE National Focal Point nominated by their country if not yet nominated, and that the National Focal Points should actively work with the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to validate Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs). (Plenary decision 23-21)

¹ See <http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html>.

² See <https://unece.org/trade/uncfact/unlocode-child-code-repository>

³ See <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/ECE-TRADE-C-CEFACT-2023-022E.pdf>

⁴ See <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/ECE-TRADE-C-CEFACT-2023-023E.pdf>

⁵ See <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/ECE-TRADE-C-CEFACT-2023-014E.pdf>

9. The secretariat has continued to work to enhance the UN/LOCODE Focal Point Network. Since the last annual meeting, the network has been expanded by the new nominations of Indonesia and the renominations of Mongolia and the United Kingdom.⁶

10. As requested, the secretariat organized a virtual workshop for the officials of Indonesia, Bhutan and the United Kingdom to introduce the UN/LOCODE concept, UNECE Recommendation No.16 and the UN/LOCODE maintenance policy and procedure.

11. The UNECE secretariat attended the fifth session of the Joint FAO-IMO-ILO Ad-hoc Working Group on Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Related Matters (JWG5) (Geneva, 8-12 January 2024). In the section on “Interagency Cooperation to Promote and Implement Internationally Agreed Measures to Combat IUU Fishing and Related Matters” of its working document⁷, the UNECE’s cooperation on UN/LOCODE with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is mentioned. In the working document, the points related to UN/LOCODE are referenced as follows:

- As one of the UN/LOCODE child codes, the IMO Port Facility Number is used to identify port facilities of all kinds, with a focus on maritime security compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security regulations.
- UNECE’s intervention at the 47th session of the IMO Facilitation Committee (FAL 47) (London, 13-17 March 2023) to remove a recommendation of only using GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) for vessel-berth compatibility check in the Guidelines for Harmonized Communication and Electronic Exchange of Operational Data for Port Call. The secretariat reiterated that UN/LOCODE be used to identify ports and GS1 GLN be used to identify sub-locations at ports to avoid confusion and adverse impacts on trade facilitation.
- Use of UN/LOCODE to support the fight against IUU Fishing due to its importance as the international standard to guarantee consistency and accuracy when identifying and exchanging information on ports, especially for the designated ports (DPs) under the PSMA. Discussions at TWG-IE3 were held to consider the possibility of mandating the use of UN/LOCODE.
- Expanding the use of UN/LOCODE to other areas, such as maritime security, environmental protection and sustainable fishery, in order to ensure harmonization and interoperability of data exchange for sustainable and digital cross-border trade.

12. At the JWG5, one recommendation was made related to UN/LOCODE:

“The JWG 5 recommends FAO, IMO and other relevant organizations to promote the implementation of relevant international standards and instruments, such as UN/LOCODE and UN/FLUX, to enhance communication and electronic exchange of data for sustainable fisheries management.”

13. GS1 contacted the secretariat concerning the initiative to associate UN/LOCODE with GS1 Global Location Number (GLN). CONAS BV, the GS1 Netherlands member, has built a Global Location Data Service making location data from different sources, such as UN/LOCODE, GS1 GLN, IMO Port Facility Number, SMDG, BIC, IATA and

⁶ See <https://unece.org/trade/uncfact/unlocode/NFPs>.

⁷

See https://indico.un.org/event/1008277/attachments/13000/40175/final_JWG%205_Working%20Document_03012024.pdf

other location datasets, easily findable on its portal. The CONAS service connects with services operated by Data Owners (if available) to enable users to view more extensive data at the source. In this Global Location Data Service, GS1 GLN is used to serve as a common system-to-system identifier across all stakeholders and all kinds of locations, instead of replacing UN/LOCODE or any other location data code sets. To facilitate this common system-to-system identifier function, GS1 Netherland intends to make this UN/LOCODES - GLN linkage information publicly available in the free global information service verified by GS1⁸. This greatly improves both safety and efficiency of operations in maritime, ports and supply chains in general. CONAS paid the GS1 license fees for the GLN associated with UN/LOCODE thus making use of those GLN's completely free of charge for all other users.

14. The amendments of the Facilitation (FAL) Convention to make the Maritime Single Window for data exchange mandatory in ports around the world, adopted at the Facilitation Committee (FAL 46) session (London, 9-13 May 2022), entered into force on 1 January 2024. UN/LOCODE is used to identify ports in the Maritime Single Window, for example, in the European Maritime Single Window.

15. At the 47th meeting of the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency (MA) (Paris, 23 May 2023), its Task Force (TF) reported that the main item on the TF agenda remained the treatment of locally official languages. The TF was currently surveying the content of part 2 of ISO 3166, in this regard, with a view to establishing a consistent approach. The current interim solution for these situations was to add locally official subdivision names under the 'local variant' heading in 3166-2. This would be implemented for Germany as part of the 2023 updates process. The definition of the term 'administrative language' should be established.

16. The ISO 3166 MA also discussed the future revision of its Terms of Reference, including which types of change in a subdivision would require changes to the subdivision code. Particularly, whether a name change or alteration of the extent of a subdivision would require a corresponding change in the subdivision code.

17. The UN/CEFACT JSON-LD Web Vocabulary Project⁹ aims to deliver a high-quality JSON-LD vocabulary that can be used to express all UN/CEFACT schematics. The UN/CEFACT JSON-LD code publication provides an additional source to access the UN/LOCODE directory in both a human and machine-readable format. Some users use the JSON-LD code publication to update UN/LOCODEs in their business system.

III. UN/LOCODE maintenance

18. Led by the Convener of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team, with the support of the secretariat, the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team has been working on the validation of the UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) with the collaborative maintenance procedure in line with UNECE Recommendation No. 16¹⁰. The team benefitted from the collaboration between the public and private sectors, including UN/LOCODE national focal points (NFPs) appointed by governments, industry experts, and representatives of international organizations.

19. The UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team conducts its work via online meetings for two maintenance cycles. All team members are welcome to attend the weekly meeting. There is no obligation to participate in all the meetings; however, the DMR submitters must be present to justify their DMRs.

⁸ See <https://www.gs1.nl/barcodes/codes-verifieren/verified-by-gs1/>

⁹ See <https://vocabulary.uncefact.org/unlocode-countries>

¹⁰ UNECE Recommendation No. 16: United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (ECE/TRADE/459). Available at <https://unece.org/info/Trade/CEFACT/pub/21828>.

20. The Convenor regularly updates the Guidelines on UN/LOCODE Maintenance¹¹. Because of sharing the useful guidelines on the website and direct communications with DMR submitters at the maintenance meeting, the secretariat has received fewer junk DMRs and the quality of DMRs has improved.

21. Considering the very limited resources in the secretariat due to the ongoing liquidity crises affecting the UN regular budget, the secretariat is proposing of changing the frequency of the UN/LOCODE directory updates to once per year instead of twice per year, until the situation is resolved.

IV. UN/LOCODE system

22. In 2022, the UNECE Information Systems Unit informed the secretariat that the current UN/LOCODE system was non-compliant with the Minimum-Security Requirements for Public Websites of the United Nations ICT Technical Procedure; such a non-compliant application posed an operational and reputational risk to the secretariat. Because of non-compliance with such requirements, access to the website were planned to be limited until any missing or insufficient controls had been updated.

23. The secretariat hired a consultant to fix the cyber security problem in the last quarter of 2023. In accordance with the Office of Information and Communications Technology – UNECE Audit Report, the following issues were mitigated as a matter of urgency:

- Conduct a thorough review of the application's business logic and to enforce best practices in account management.
- Disable directory listing, particularly for unauthenticated access across the entire web root.
- Rectify SQL injection vulnerabilities by implementing prepared statements.

24. The secretariat requested the United Nations Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT) to conduct a cyber security audit on the fixed front end. The front end of the UN/LOCODE system passed the audit in February 2024, with the support of the UNECE Information Systems Unit.

V. UN/LOCODE strategy

25. At its 2023 meeting, the Advisory Group recommended the establishment of a task force, led by the Vice Chair and supported by the secretariat, to systematically address these challenges raised recently during the UN/LOCODE maintenance (Decision 23-16). Following this decision, the secretariat organized the kick-off meeting for the UN/LOCODE Task Force¹² (Virtually, 28 September 2023), attended by 37 experts.

26. The Secretary of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group presented the ToR of the UN/LOCODE Task Force (UNLOCODE-AG/2023/INF.3), including the Task Force's objective, scope, activities, and mode of operation.

27. The UN/LOCODE Task Force Four decided to set up four Subgroups:

- Subgroup 1: Identification of small fishery ports in the FAO Global Record.
- Subgroup 2: Feasibility study to fast-track the UN/LOCODE as an ISO standard.

¹¹ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Guidelines_UNLOCODE-Maintenance-Sep2023.pdf

¹² See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/382994>

- Subgroup 3: Address the co-existence of UN/LOCODEs assigned to locations (areas) and sub-locations (points).
- Subgroup 4: Testing of the new re-engineered online data maintenance request (DMR) application

28. With the support of the secretariat, the leaders of the subgroups managed their work with the interested experts through the working meetings and shared the status with the Vice Chair at the coordination meetings.

29. Because of the capacity and availability of the leaders, there is no progress made by Subgroup 1 and Subgroup 2.

30. The outputs and findings of Subgroup 3 and Subgroup 4 are reflected in a report (UNLOCODE-AG/2023/INF.4) submitted to the 2024 meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group for discussion.

31. Since Subgroup 4 accomplished its task when the front end of the UN/LOCODE system cleared the cyber security audit, it was agreed to continue the mandate of Subgroup 4 to advise on the re-engineering of the entire UN/LOCODE system.

32. With the success of the UN/LOCODE Task Force, the secretariat recommended a new organigram of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group, which would be now composed of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team to validate DMRs, and the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team to address policy issues raised by the UN/LOCODE community.

33. In this connection, the Chair of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group would take the role of the Convenor of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Team while the Vice-Chair would take the role of the Convenor of the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team.

VI. Fundraising

34. To address the shortage of resources provided by the Regular Budget, the secretariat prepared a project proposal for fundraising (UNLOCODE-AG/2023/INF.5). The proposal aims to facilitate the establishment of the UN/LOCODE ecosystem and its sustainable development, including:

- A new re-engineered ICT system, covering the whole UN/LOCODE data lifecycle, to maintain, generate and publish the UN/LOCODE directory on an agreed regular basis.
- An enhanced collaborative mechanism of the UN/LOCODE community, to ensure the governance and development of the UN/LOCODE standard, by revising the UNECE Recommendation No. 16 and address emerging policy issues raised by the UN/LOCODE community.
- Capacity building and knowledge transfer for a consistent and standardized application of Recommendation No. 16.
- Expansion of the use of UN/LOCODE.

35. The proposal has been already shared with the USA and the EU.

36. The secretariat referenced the practices of the center of excellence run by the Cooperation and Partnerships Section of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, and the Road Safety Trust Fund run by the Sustainable Transport Division of UNECE. For the purpose of fundraising, the secretariat is advising to task the UN/LOCODE Strategy Team to set up Subgroup 5 to prepare a business plan and present it to the next meeting of the UN/LOCODE Advisory Group.